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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the work of department heads and the opinicns of those holding this position in a state university. Forty-three department heads responded to a questionnaire involving departmental goals, job requirements, and job satisfaction. The results show that the heads are basically satisfied except for opportunities for self-development. They have duties along the dimensions of departmental leadership, prcfessional visability, resource administration, and liaison activities. They tend to consider themselves as leaders in content specialities and primarily enjoy activities of program guidance and supportive development of faculty and students. Administrative duties are typically seen as unpleasant and time consuming. A 15-item bibliography is included. (Author)

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AN INVESTIGATION OF DEPARTMENT HEADS AT A STATE UNIVERSITY

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Forty-three department heads responded to a questionnaire involving departmental goals, job requirements, and job satisfaction. The results show that the heads are basically satisfied except for opportunities for Self-Development. They have duties along the dimensions of Departmental Leadership, Professional Visability, Resource Administration, and Liaison Activities. They tend to consider themselves as leaders in content specialties and primarily enjoy activities of program guidance and supportive development of faculty and students. Administrative duties are typically seen as unpleasant and time consuming.

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Several authors previously have recognized the importance of departments as the traditional primary organization in colleges and universities (Peterson, 1970). The Confidence Crisis, a major and recent work about departments, looks at these units in terms of internal and external factors. The data base is impressive--seven departments from each of 15 institutions, and the work provides excellent material for those involved or concerned with departments. In that book the writers, after presenting a short review of the role of department leader, conclude:

> Tradition and faculty demand require the chairman to be a scholar, but the demands placed upon the chairman include many functions . . . . Most new chairmen lack familiarity with many of these activities, and there is usually no ready way to acquire familiarity. They attain the familiarity at the expense of their scholarly effort. (Dressel et al., 1970)

Peterson has recently noted that "The chairman is expected to be omniscient, omnicompetent, omnipresent, and humble (Peterson, 1970)." Other authors have presented warnings and advice to those who head the departmental organization. They have also noted specific tasks a head or chairman might perform (Heimler, 1967; McKeachie, 1968; Satlow, 1968; Malpass, 1970; Blomerly, 1971; O'Grady, 1971).

Research on this role in two-year institutions has found that duties of this type can be placed into a taxonomy of specific job components or dimensions. These dimensions involved production activities; maintenance of procedures, programs, and involvement for staff and students; support of production; support of the department as a viable organization; adapting to changes; and integrating resources (Smith, 1972). While many, therefore, have written of the role of departmental chairman, little has been done to quantify the aspects of the job and the satisfactions or lack of them associated with it.

The thoughtful administration of higher education requires that this information be obtained. The philosophy of sound personnel management is predicated on knowledge of job requirements. This information is essential for rational selection, evaluating and retention. It can be used in orientation programs for potential chairmen. It can be used for evaluating the structure of roles between institutions. Perhaps most important, however, is the essential nature of this knowledge in generating a firm organizational model of university governance.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected on a 59 item questionnaire mailed to 45 department heads at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the colleges of Agriculture (14), Arts and Sciences (17), Business (3), and Engineering (9). All questionnaires were returned. The major areas to be reported in this survey included measures on six aspects of job satisfaction, future career intentions, perception on what is and what should be the emphasis on ten departmental goals, and the time requirements of and enjoyment derived from 27 specific dutues.

The items on the questionnaire on job satisfaction were obtained from prior work relating to the motivation of behavior through a hierarchy of needs developed by Maslow (McGregor, 1957). The list of goals came from a larger list of organizational goals for institutions of higher education (Gross and Grambsch, 1968). Dual responses were requested to view the results of pressures on the departments. The list of specific duties was compiled from the previously described literature. The satisfaction items were scaled from a 5 for "Very Satisfied" to a 1 for "Very Dissatisfied;" a similar scale for goal emphasis ranged from 5 to 1 for "A very great deal" to "Little or none at all." The effort required for each duty was scaled

from 5 to 1. The responses were stated in terms of hours per week (for example, 5 or more, 2 to 4, about 1, less than 1, none) to provide a standardized format. The number of hours were then interpreted in terms of demand (5 or more = Very heavy demand; about 1 = Average demand; none = No demand). This scale allowed the standardization of responses while not over-estimating the true accuracy of the response. The enjoyability of each duty was obtained by asking each respondent to list the five most enjoyable and the five least enjoyable duties.

Several discussion questions were included to obtain information on role orientation.

Researchers computed a multiple regression to explain overall satisfaction of departmental heads. Correlations were obtained for the amount of emphasis which was placed on a goal and the amount which should be placed on a goal and between time required for duties and the enjoyment of them. Factor analysis was employed to form taxonomies for the specific duties. Four dimensions were extracted on the basis of eigenvalue size and factor loadings and rotated toward oblique simple structure. The top items on each factor grouped into clusters. In the cases where items were in more than one group, the item was placed in the group with which it had the highest average intercorrelations. While more advanced clustering techniques were available, this method was employed because of the limited sample size. The content of the scales seems to be homogeneous, and this judgment is reinforced by the internal consistency of the scores as measured by Crombach's Alpha.

Results

The average department head respondent was slightly over 40 years old, had been in his position for almost 5 years, and had been a member of the faculty at some institution for around 17 years. He oversaw a department of about 18 faculty members and reportedly averaged a 55-hour work week in the process. While about half of this time (26 hours) was spent on departmental administration and leadership, he still had ten hours for teaching and student counseling, nine hours for research and professional development, four hours for college- and university-wide activities, and five hours for public service. Other activities average about one hour per week. These and all other results are undoubtedly affected by the relative number of heads reporting from the various colleges. The means and correlations for the various aspects of satisfaction are given in Table I.

[Table I about here.]

A forward stepwise regression analysis was computed to determine the optimal set of weights on the individual satisfactions to predict overall satisfactions from the five potential sources of satisfaction. The resultant multiple correlation was .82.

The results on the emphasis placed on the various departmental goals are shown in Table II.

[Table II about here.]

The results of the data for the duties are given in Table III. The correlation of time and enjoyment reflect the congruency of the job duties and the reinforcement structure of the chairmen.

[Table III about here.]

After the factor analysis of the items, they were grouped into four sets and the means and standard deviations were computed.* These results

*Grouping was done on the basis of item correlations with the oblique vectors of the reference structure.

are shown in Table IV.

[Table IV about here.]

Discussion

The descriptive data on the respondents are presented as a reference point to allow the reader to determine the generalization of the results to other institutions of higher education. Those in institutions with differing characteristics of chairmen should keep these differences in mind as they review the information and conclusions of this study.

The weekly time requirements of the respondents show that the efforts required are heavily oriented toward administration and departmental leadership. The mean satisfaction with the specific job aspects support Maslow's theory of hierarchical needs as discussed by McGregor (1957). Maslow postulated that behavior was motivated by a prescribed sequence of needs ranging from lower order physical needs through social needs and finally to knowledge and identity needs. The highest need or motivator was the desire for self-actualization. He further indicated that satisfied needs do not act as motivators. In this study the social need of peer acceptance obtained the highest average score and also failed to enter the regression equation to explain overall satisfaction. In addition, the lowest average satisfaction was with the self-actualization type need of continued self-development. In terms of Maslow's theory this self-actualization need would be the last to become active and thus have the lowest level of satisfaction. The results of this aspect of the study, therefore, are congruent with what was anticipated from Maslow's theory.

In the specific context of the academic environment and departments, the results support the idea that the department chairman is at heart an academician who has difficulty equating administrative advancement with

TABLE I

Satisfaction With Six Aspects of Job Satisfaction[a]

Satisfaction with the Aspect	Mean	S.D.	Correlation 1	2	3	4	5
Recognition for Performance	3.91	.895	1.000				
Degree of Autonomy	3.98	.913	.493	1.000			
Informal Peer Acceptance	4.35	.686	.056	.243	1.000		
Continued Self-Development	2.86	1.246	.140	.292	.472	1.000	
Possibilities for Achievement	3.55	1.194	.298	.322	.348	.615	1.000
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.98	.857	.523	.577	.339	.578	.671

[a]A very great deal = 5; A great deal = 4; A large amount = 3; Some = 2; Little or none at all = 1.

Overall = .242 X Recongition + .249 X Autonomy + .90 X Self-Satisfaction Development + .262 X Potential Achievement + .702

Multiple Correlation: $R = .82$, $p < .05$

TABLE II

Emphasis Which Is and Should Be Placed on Ten Departmental Goals[a]

	Is Placed		Should be Placed		
	X	S.D.	X	S.D.	Correlation
1. New research knowledge	3.28	1.15	3.82	1.11	.88
2. Well versed student	3.90	1.04	4.33	.85	.76
3. Efficient organization	3.10	1.26	3.55	1.22	.84
4. Service	3.00	1.20	3.46	1.10	.81
5. Improving relative quality	4.00	1.10	4.26	.96	.74
6. Faculty development	3.88	1.12	4.17	.91	.68
7. Central administration	3.38	1.10	3.35	1.10	.80
8. Training student	3.30	1.22	3.51	1.21	.80
9. Congenial work place and academic freedom	3.80	1.22	4.12	1.03	.79
10. Graduate program	3.44	1.40	3.98	1.24	.78
X	3.51	0.34	3.86	0.35	.89

[a]A very great deal = 5; A great deal = 4; A large amount = 3; Some = 2; Little or none at all =1.

TABLE III

Roles of Department Heads: Time Required and Enjoyment

	Duties	Time Demand[a] X	Time Demand[a] S.D.	Enjoyment[b] X	Enjoyment[b] S.D.	r
1.	Long range planning	3.53	0.88	2.37	.655	.51
2.	Supervising graduate assistants	2.56	1.24	2.09	.294	.51
3.	Encouraging professional faculty developments	3.44	0.80	2.44	.502	.27
4.	Managing clerical/technical staff	3.56	1.01	1.58	.545	.09
5.	Budget preparation and presentation	2.93	0.71	1.51	.506	-.03
6.	Administering financial resources	3.70	0.86	1.81	.500	.09
7.	Informal faculty leadership	4.10	0.93	2.54	.505	.35
8.	Managing facilities	3.00	0.91	1.49	.506	-.05
9.	Obtaining faculty	2.91	1.19	2.19	.627	.48
10.	Obtaining graduate students	2.65	1.15	2.02	.266	.34
11.	Evaluating faculty	3.12	0.82	1.72	.504	.20
12.	Managing academic programs	3.51	0.86	2.07	.338	.29
13.	Managing gifts, grants, and contracts	3.28	1.20	2.05	.375	.29
14.	Encouraging faculty research	3.20	0.94	2.16	.531	.11
15.	Maintaining faculty morale	3.64	1.10	2.09	.570	.13
16.	Own students	4.02	1.28	2.63	.489	.66
17.	Advising students	3.51	1.20	2.33	.522	.45
18.	Representing organization in administration	3.74	0.79	2.02	.597	.47
19.	Encouraging organizational improvement	3.56	0.87	2.30	.558	.44
20.	Maintaining student records	2.26	0.82	1.49	.506	-.19
21.	Attending professional meetings	2.93	1.12	2.26	.492	.38
22.	Having organizational meetings	2.81	0.79	1.95	.305	.16
23.	Providing information to faculty	3.02	0.71	2.02	.266	.25
24.	College and university committees	2.91	1.15	1.77	.527	-.08
25.	Finding jobs for graduates	2.07	0.77	1.95	.305	.01
26.	Assigning faculty duties	2.67	0.84	1.88	.324	.12
27.	Administering outside services	2.49	1.40	1.91	.479	.18

[a]Time shown here is on a five-point scale and not actual hours.

[b]Enjoyment is derived from a 1 to 3 scale where 1 is one of the five least enjoyable duties.

TABLE IV

Groupings of Job Duties

	Items	Name	Internal Consistency	Time Demand	Enjoyment
I	7,9,12,15,16 17,18,22,24	Departmental Leadership	.79	3.46	2.17
II	1,2,3,10,13 14,25	Professional Visability	.71	2.94	2.16
III	4,5,6,8	Resource Administration	.78	3.30	1.60
IV	11,19,20,21 23,26,27	Liaison Activities	.74	2.84	1.94

continued self-development. This reinforces the conclusion by Hill and French (1967) that chairmen are viewed by the faculty as "the first among equals." The results of the multiple regression indicate that satisfaction with the four aspects of Recognition, Autonomy, Self-Development, and Potentoal Achievement explain over two-thirds of the variation in Overall Satisfaction. This finding is compatible with previous work relating level of position to the effectiveness of various needs to reinforce. Porter (1963) reported that "Self-Actualization and Autonomy needs . . . are probably the most critical need areas for organizations to consider in their reactions with their managers and executives."

The responses to the emphasis on departmental goals show that the traditional academic-type goals obtain and, in the opinion of the respondents, should obtain the largest amount of emphasis. The primary focus, according to this group, is on the output of well-versed students and on the goal of increasing quality. Service and administrative goals, while perceived as receiving "a large amount" of emphasis are seen as less important.

The importance placed on the various goals is fairly well related to the results of the goal emphasis found for universities in the study by Gross and Grambsch (1968). While comparisons are difficult because of the condensation of their original list, congruency between what is and what should be placed on various goals seems to be higher at the departmental level than the university level.

The correlations between "is" and "should be" show a high agreement on the relative importance of each goal (See Table II). On nine out of ten departmental goals, the respondents thought the goals should receive more emphasis. In all areas, however, a high correlation was obtained between what is being done and what should be done on each individual goal.

These high correlations suggest a strong acceptance by the department heads on the relative emphasis placed on the various goals. The difference of means between the two measures does show that some pressure is preventing certain academic goals from obtaining the desired emphasis. This is what would be expected if those who champion academic goals were being frustrated by other forces.

The most time demanding duties reported by department heads, in decreasing order of time, are informal faculty leadership, teaching, encouraging organizational improvement, and managing the non-academic staff. The least time demanding duties are finding jobs for graduates, maintaining student records, administering outside services, and supervising graduate assistants. Fortunately, there is a high relationship between the average demand of a task and the average enjoyment of a task. In other words, most tasks are self-reinforcing; chairmen frequently do what they enjoy doing. Tasks related to teaching and leadership are most enjoyable; those related to administrative and financial matters are least enjoyable. The major exception is managing non-academic staff which is both one of the most demanding and also one of the least enjoyable duties.

The correlations between time demand and enjoyment appear in column 5 of Table III. A perfect positive correlation (1.0) would suggest that those who enjoy the task most also spend more time performing it; a zero correlation would imply that time required is independent of enjoyment; a perfect negative correlation (-1.0) would indicate that those who spend most time on the task also disliked it the most.

It is notable that the highest positive correlations are in the areas of broad planning, development, and student interactions. This again implies that those who do the most in these aspects also enjoy them the most. The most technical or administrative aspects of the job have zero to negative

correlations indicating that these jobs are not self-reinforcing. In other words, they do not produce any systematic intrinsic reward such that the more time required the most enjoyed. The correlation of average demand and average enjoyment is .51 showing a moderate congruence between these two concepts.

The final analysis represents an effort to develop an understanding of the job dimensions for a chairman. While these results should be considered tentative because of the limited sample size, they represent a conservative estimate for the number of job dimensions. A larger sample may well reveal a more refined set of dimensions. These job dimensions do have support from prior research and also from the apparent consistency of their content. The first scale is called "Departmental Leadership" and is comprised of tasks related to people-centered activities of a department. These tasks include inter-personal faculty leadership, interacting with students, holding and attending meetings, and expressing departmental needs to the central administration. It transcends the specific taxonomies given by Smith and is closely related to the concept of the department as a reference group as discussed by Dressel. It also parallels the concept of "people centered" as discussed by Blake and Mouton (1969) and the orientation of the Human Behavior school of management theory discussed by Koontz (1961).

The second scale contains tasks related to planning and encouraging research. Successful pursuit of these activities would tend to increase the professional reputation of the department, its members, and the University. In light of compatability of the results on this scale with previous work by Dressel (1970) and by Smith (1972), this construct is called "Professional Visability."

The third group of tasks is also analogous to one of the roles proposed by Smith (1972), "Managerial Activities," but this dimension lacks the

items of conflict resolution which he used. This group includes managing non-academic staff, facilities, and financial resources and is probably more aptly considered to be "Resource Administration."

The fourth, and final, group of tasks includes production-type tasks such as assigning duties and administering services, encouraging faculty and departmental improvement, attending professional meetings, and maintaining student records. Another interpretation of this role is that of a connecting link in an organization. The tasks relate to jobs which assure the flow of information from and to the department. In fact, they reflect rather closely the concept advanced by Peterson (1970) of the department head as the "man-in-the middle." These interpretations lead to the conclusion that an appropriate name for this role is "Liaison Activities."

The review of responses to several open ended questions reinforce the results previously discussed. The heads seem to agree on the major advantages of the position. The single most important reward is the ability to develop and to support the thrust of the department and its program. Closely related is the ability to support and to help others develop. This set of behaviors, one might add, is more highly related to a leadership than to an administrative role. In other words, if department heads had the opportunity, they would most enjoy performing the function in which they have more experience: that of leadership and program orientation in their specific professional area.

Department heads report a major disadvantage in the position is a lack of time. Redundant administrative duties, department heads declare, are in part responsible for this time pressure. This reflects results of the enjoyment data for duties; those duties related to paperwork and administrative duties were reported to be least enjoyable. One other type of disadvantage is worthy of note. The head, as a primary-level-organization

manager, gets pressure from all sides: faculty, administration, students, and outside groups.

The department heads gave several comments on how their situation might be improved. Most comments were related to reducing reaction time of the administrative procedures and organization. Several comments in this category also suggested the possible reduction of committees. In line with this desire for a streamlined organization were comments about the lack of understanding of policies, procedures, and forms. Desires for an assistant and for other administrative support were viewed as other possible changes. All of these changes are congruent with the low enjoyability of administrative duties. One of the more frequently proposed changes was to increase a department head's autonomy. These ideas doubtless reflect the primary interest in guiding programs and in making long-range plans and would probably increase job satisfaction.

When asked what education and training would most benefit them, most respondents felt that needed training might be viewed in three areas. The first is learning about specific local policies and procedures. The other two types of skills were management of resources and providing interpersonal leadership. Since the typical department head comes from the professional ranks and may have had little prior opportunity to develop the administrative and leadership skills required in his new role, it is encouraging to find the desire for managerial education.

This result emphasizes a dilemma discussed in the literature. The department head is a professional from the faculty who is required to make a drastic role shift. It is no secret that faculty and administration sometimes disagree on priorities, goals, and other key issues. This tends to establish two major professional reference groups within any institution with many of the same built-in constraints as labor and management in industry.

When the faculty member becomes a department head, the reference group is no longer only the faculty, it also includes the administration. It is not too surprising that some frustration and dissatisfaction should ensue. Dressel also points to the problem of strange new duties which not only emphasize the shift, but also drain a disproportionate amount of time away from the head's prior pursuits. In light of these shifts in tasks and reference groups, a department head faces many different role expectations and pressures.

Conclusions

This study has looked at three major phases of department heads; aspects of satisfaction, agreement with departmental goals, and specific job duties. From these phases a picture of this department leader has begun to emerge. Chairmen are satisfied with most major aspects of their job except potential for further development. Also, those responding showed moderately high agreement on the amount of emphasis placed on various goals, with major importance placed on professionally accepted departmental excellence. There is some restriction of the amount of emphasis placed on academic goals. Those duties which could be considered to be leadership, developmental, and supportive tasks obtained the highest scores relative to time spent and enjoyment. In these tasks also those enjoying them most reported more effort in these areas, implying autonomy of emphasis and that the more time spent, the most these duties were enjoyed. On the other hand, most administrative duties seem to require effort independent of their enjoyment.

The combination of these results would support the conception of the chairman previously presented in the literature. The chairman has a self-percpetion of a leader, not an administrator. He appears to have a fair amount of control over relative emphasis placed on departmental goals.

In terms of his job, he most enjoys the duties similar to those he had as a senior faculty member and tends to dislike administrative activities.

A final point germane to administrators is that many chairmen are interested in obtaining formal managerial training. This then is a challenge for administration: to help chairmen obtain the training they want and frequently need.

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